Legislated Programs Introduction

This section includes resource conservation systems established to protect or enhance specific soil, water, air, plant, or animal resources in areas serviced by NRCS Field Offices to achieve the level or resource protection stipulated by legislated programs.

Food Security Act Systems

The Basic and Alternative Conservation Systems were developed to comply with the Food Security Act (FSA) of 1985. The 2 systems, which protect and enhance the soil resource, were established for fields classified as highly erodible land (HEL). These erosion control systems apply only to conservation plans and conservation systems developed to carry out the provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended by the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990, and the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (National Food Security Act Manual, 3rd Ed., 1996).

Basic Conservation System (BCS)

A Basic Conservation System (BCS) is an erosion control system for treating sheet, rill, wind and ephemeral gully erosion on highly erodible land (HEL). A BCS may be a component of a Resource Management System (RMS). The BCS must achieve soil loss tolerance requirements or "T" for the principal soil it is designed to protect. Soil loss estimates were calculated using the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE). BCSs were not developed for Hawaii.

Plans developed after July 3, 1996 will use the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) to calculate soil loss for sheet and rill erosion.

If BCSs were not cost-effective or technically practicable to implement, the NRCS State Conservationist had the authority to approve systems with a higher level of soil erosion on HEL in an area in order to meet the Food Security Act requirements. These systems were call Alternative Conservation Systems.

Alternative Conservation System (ACS)

An Alternative Conservation System (ACS) is an erosion control system for treating sheet, rill, wind and ephemeral gully erosion on highly erodible land (HEL). A Alternative Conservation System developed after July 3, 1996, must achieve a substantial reduction in potential soil loss, (75% reduction in potential soil loss not to exceed 2T).

In Hawaii, the NRCS State Conservationist approved ACSs that allow twice or two times the soil loss tolerance requirements or "2T" for the principal soil it is designed to protect. The ACSs documented in this section of the FOTG were developed prior to the 1996 Farm bill and therefore was based on USLE calculations.

The 1996 Farm Bill specified that the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) be used to estimate soil loss for conservation systems developed after July 3, 1996. ACS guidance documents based on RUSLE were not developed for Hawaii.

Other Systems

Guidance documents for planning conservation systems where local programs initiated or promoted by Soil & Water Conservation Districts have special requirements will be documented here. To date, none have been developed for Hawaii.